

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1. (Currently Amended)

A method for packet forwarding over a network ~~an N x STS-1 SONET network from a source port to a destination port~~ client data occupying a group of one or more STS-1's at said source port, said method comprising establishing a data flow path defined by said STS-1s from said source port to said destination port defined by said STS-1s, comprising:

grouping a plurality of packets together to form a grouping based on each of the plurality of packet's allocation to a particular client and the amount of bandwidth allocated to each of the plurality of packets;

assigning the grouping to a determined data flow path from a source port to a destination port, the determination made expressly for the grouping; and

establishing the determined data flow path for the grouping from the source port to the destination port.

Claim 2. (Currently Amended)

A method according to claim 1, further comprising notifying each of said ~~ports~~ source port and destination port of said data flow path, and providing to said source port an address identifying said destination port and providing to said destination port an address identifying said source port.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended)

An apparatus for packet forwarding over a network ~~an N x STS-1 SONET network~~ from a source port to a destination port client data occupying a group of one or more STS-1s at said source port, said apparatus comprising:

a grouping device that groups a plurality of packets together to form a grouping based on each of the plurality of packet's allocation to a particular client and the amount of bandwidth allocated to each of the plurality of packets;

an assignment device that assigns the grouping to a determined data flow path from a source port to a destination port, the determination made expressly for the grouping; and

- (a) a path identifier for identifying a data flow path ~~comprising said STS-1s and~~ extending from said source port to said destination port and notifying each of said ports of said data flow path; ~~and~~
- (b) ~~an address identifier for identifying and providing to said source port and address identifying said destination port and for identifying and providing to said destination port an address identifying said source port.~~

Claim 4. (New)

The method according to claim 1 wherein the network is a SONET network.

Claim 5. (New)

The method according to claim 4, wherein the packets are STS-1 packets.

Claim 6. (New)

The method according to claim 1, wherein the grouping is designated by a network access device.

Claim 7. (New)

The apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising an address identifier for identifying and providing to said source port and address identifying said destination port and for identifying and providing to said destination port an address identifying said source port.

Claim 8. (New)

The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the network is a SONET network.

Claim 9. (New)

The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the packets are STS-1 packets.